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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000110

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: BARAK AND DAVUTOGLU ON GAZA, SYRIA AND IRAN

REF: A. ANKARA 108
[1](#)B. ANKARA 58
[1](#)C. TEL AVIV 124

Classified By: A/POL COUNSELOR Jeremiah Howard; Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Israeli Embassy's readout on the January 17 Davutolgu-Barak meeting was markedly more downbeat than that offered us by the Turkish MFA. Barak was cautiously receptive to a GoT proposal that it be permitted to deliver pre-fabricated housing units to Gaza. He discouraged Turkey's hopes for an early resumption of its suspended proximity talks between Israel and Syria. Barak was satisfied with his dialogue with Davutoglu, but the Israeli Embassy is unsure of next steps towards re-establishing a reliable communications channel between the two governments' political levels. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Israeli Embassy Spokesman Amit Zarouk January 21 provided detail on the 3.5 hour January 17 conversation between FM Davutoglu and visiting Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak that contrasted markedly with the Turkish MFA's perception of the visit (REF A). Zarouk was much more downbeat. He focused on the GoT's abiding interest in gaining humanitarian access to Gaza and re-establishing proximity talks between Syria and Israel.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Zarouk, Davutoglu reaffirmed the GoT's desire to lead a high-profile humanitarian assistance mission into Gaza. Barak rejected assertions Gaza is gripped by a humanitarian crisis. He said food, medicine, and other essentials are being allowed in unhindered. He confirmed GoI unwillingness to permit Turkish building construction materials entry into Gaza. Davutoglu countered by requesting Turkey be allowed to truck in 100 pre-fabricated housing units. Barak was personally receptive and promised to present the request to an upcoming meeting of the Israeli "security" cabinet. He cautioned, however, the prevailing pattern of anti-Israeli rhetoric emanating from the Turkish government's political level had not predisposed Israeli security affairs ministries in Turkey's favor.

[1](#)4. (C) Barak implied HAMAS could expedite the lifting of the Gaza blockade by releasing kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Responding to Davutoglu's immediate offer of Turkey as a back channel to HAMAS, Barak, noting the GoI's preference that Ankara reinforce HAMAS' isolation, suggested Turkey urge HAMAS directly and via Syria to accept "the deal already on the table." Barak did not accede to Davutoglu's

request for details on the deal, fearing the Turkish proclivity toward mediation would complicate the German and Egyptian efforts already underway.

¶15. (C) Davutoglu pressed hard for GoI endorsement of a renewed Turkish effort to mediate proximity talks with Syria, claiming Erdogan's rising credibility with "the Arab street" would enable him to "seal a deal." Barak countered Erdogan has no credibility with the Israeli street. Given Erdogan's repeated harsh criticism of Israel, the Israeli cabinet would not soon consider a Turkish mediation role. Implying a request to cease public attacks on Israel, Barak told Davutoglu: "You must help me help you be in the process."

¶16. (SBU) Davutoglu reiterated Turkey's fear it would suffer collaterally from sanctions or military action against Iran. He claimed the international community had no alternative to repeated negotiation efforts with Tehran.

¶17. (C) During prior conversations with Zarouk and Israeli DCM Kanafi, the Israelis emphasized their hope the Barak visit would re-establish the pre-Operation Cast Lead line of communications between the two countries' political levels. Kanafi had even speculated the visit might set the stage for an Erdogan-Netanyahu relationship. Since the "sofa spat" of last week (REF B), the Israeli Embassy now fears the former bilateral intimacy may be lost for good. It is unsure of what to do as a follow-up to Barak.

¶18. (C) Zarouk described Barak as "satisfied" with the visit. Barak believes Davutoglu now understands Israeli positions. Even if the Turkish domestic political reality prevents

Davutoglu from advocating the Israeli perspective publicly, the Israeli Embassy hopes he can act as a brake on Erdogan. The embassy believes Davutoglu worked hard on Erdogan to contain the sofa spat. Nevertheless, a Barak-Davutoglu relationship would be complicated because they are not counterparts. Davutoglu belongs to Israeli FM Lieberman and, Zarouk lamented, meaningful communications between them is unimaginable.

¶19. (C) COMMENT: Fixing the Israeli-Turkish relationship will take imagination and creativity; both are in short supply among Israel's discouraged embassy staff here.
Jeffrey

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